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Memorandum for:

This memorandum was written by
of the Iberian-Aegean Branch at the request of
Secretary Weinberger.

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March 11, 1985

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**Office of European Analysis
Directorate of Intelligence**

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Greece--Presidential Powers

1. Greece is a parliamentary republic, but the current Constitution, adopted in June 1975 nearly one year after the fall of the military junta, also provides for a strong president. Karamanlis was the primary architect of the Constitution. At the time, he viewed the extensive powers accorded the president (together with the reinforced proportional election system) as safeguards for democracy designed to prevent the fragmentation of political parties and the emergence of unstable coalitions.

2. The President is elected by Parliament for a five-year term. Parliament, in contrast, is elected for a four-year term. Thus, the tenure of the President exceeds that of the Parliament which elected him -- a provision aimed at underlining the non-partisan character of the presidency.

3. As it now stands, the Constitution accords the President the following powers:

- He can dissolve Parliament (Art 41).
- He can call a referendum "on crucial national issues" and address messages to the nation under certain circumstances (Art. 44).
- He appoints the Prime Minister and approves selection of the Cabinet (Art 37).
- He can veto legislation (Art 35).
- He can dismiss the government and may convoke the Cabinet under his chairmanship under certain circumstances (Art 38).
- He may suspend certain constitutional provisions guaranteeing individual liberties upon declaration of a state of emergency (Art 48).
- He is the head of the nation's Armed Forces and as such approves all military promotions and retirements (Art 45).
- He appoints and dismisses public servants (Art 46).
- He has the right to grant pardons and commute or reduce sentences. He may also grant amnesty for political crimes (Art 47).
- He represents the State abroad, declares war, and concludes treaties of peace, alliance, and participation in international organizations (Art 36).

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4. The constitutional reforms proposed by Prime Minister Papandreou would significantly limit presidential powers and make the office of president a ceremonial one. Specifically:

- The President could no longer dissolve Parliament solely on the grounds that it did not reflect public sentiment.
- He could no longer veto legislation.
- He could no longer call for a national referendum or make direct addresses to the nation.
- He would have to follow specific steps in appointing a Prime Minister (which would, in effect, limit his flexibility in choosing the Prime Minister).
- He could no longer grant a pardon for political crimes (Parliament would decide).
- He could no longer call a state of emergency (this also would fall to Parliament).

5. In addition, Papandreou has proposed changes which would make it easier for Parliament to amend or revise the Constitution.

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